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Human Rights Commission

Statement / Amendments to the Human Rights Act (04/05/04)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following statement was issued by Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

FREDERICTON (CNB) - "Over the past two years, the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission has been engaged in an extensive review of its mandate, legislation, and governance structure. The commission authored a discussion paper, consulted its stakeholders, and held public consultations in 2003. Following those consultations, the commission submitted a report to Training and Employment Development Minister Margaret Ann Blaney, who is the minister responsible for human rights.

"The commission takes the view that in making amendments to the New Brunswick *Human Rights Act*, all of the recommendations made in the commission's recent report need to be thoroughly considered. We recognize that this may take time, but we would urge our legislators to consider the recommendations as a whole rather than simply amend one section of the *Act*.

"The commission welcomes the prospect of change as contemplated in the legislation currently before the Legislative Assembly, which would add two new prohibited grounds of discrimination: social condition and political belief or activity. Both of these were recommended in its recent report. But the commission urges New Brunswick legislators to boldly consider the bigger picture and the absolute necessity of the modest list of reforms proposed in its report.

"The report recommends a number of different types of reforms for human rights renewal in New Brunswick. These might be best summarized as "four pillars of change": prohibited grounds of discrimination; governance structure; mandatory retirement; and bona fide qualification exemptions.

Prohibited Grounds: The Commission recommends that four new grounds of discrimination be added to protect New Brunswickers from discrimination because of their socio-economic s